



The Daily

Statistics Canada

Tuesday, January 12, 1999

For release at 8:30 a.m.

MAJOR RELEASES

- **Building permits, November 1998** 3
The value of building permits for housing rose in November for the first time in three months. Combined with the first increase in four months in non-residential construction intentions, the overall value of permits rose 8.9% to \$2.8 billion.

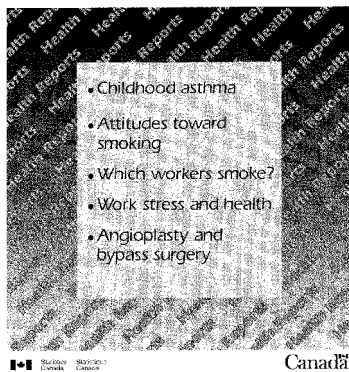
- **Childhood asthma, 1994/1995** 6
The prevalence of childhood asthma has increased sharply during the last two decades. In 1978/79, an estimated 2.5% of children under age 15 were reported to have asthma. By 1994/95, the proportion was estimated at 11.2%, or 672,000 children.

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Health Reports

Winter 1998 Volume 10 No. 3



Health reports

Winter 1998

The Winter 1998 issue of *Health reports* contains articles entitled "Childhood asthma," "Attitudes toward smoking," "Which workers smoke?" "Work stress and health," and "Variations in angioplasty and bypass surgery."

Health reports provides comprehensive and timely analysis of national and provincial health information, and vital statistics derived from surveys or administrative databases. It is designed for a broad audience that includes health professionals, researchers, policy makers, educators and students.

The Winter 1998 issue of *Health reports*, Volume 10, Number 3 (82-003-XPB, \$35/\$116; Internet: 82-003-XIE, \$26/\$87) is now available. See *How to order publications*.

For more information, contact Mary Sue Devereaux (613-951-4381), Health Statistics Division.



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PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

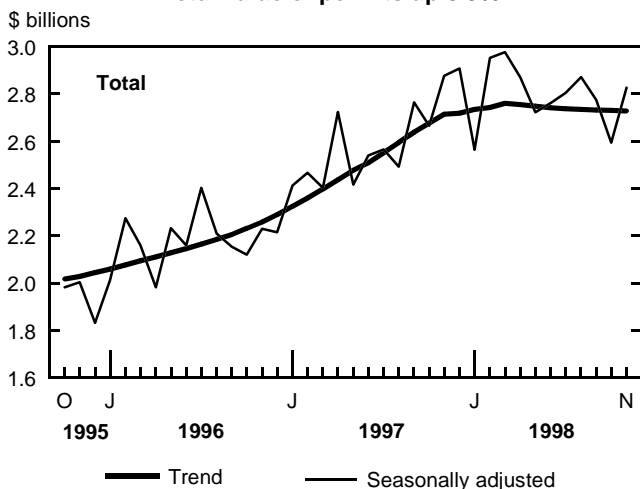
MAJOR RELEASES

Building permits

November 1998

The value of building permits for housing rose in November for the first time in three months. Combined with the first increase in four months in non-residential construction intentions, the overall value of permits rose 8.9% to \$2.8 billion.

Total value of permits up 8.9%



In November, municipalities issued \$1.6 billion in housing permits, up 12.5% from October and marking the highest level since March 1998.

In the non-residential sector, increases in commercial and institutional intentions more than offset a decrease in the industrial component. As a result, the value of non-residential permits rose 4.7% to \$1.2 billion, the first monthly increase since July 1998.

Both components contributed to monthly increase in housing

Both single and multi-family housing components contributed to November's growth in the residential sector.

Permits for multi-family housing climbed 42.8% to \$477 million, the highest level since April. The increase in the single-family sector was also significant (+3.1% to \$1.1 billion). Traditionally, the multi-family component shows significant monthly fluctuations because of large individual projects. In November, major condominium

Note to readers

Unless otherwise stated, this release presents seasonally adjusted data which ease comparisons by removing the effects of seasonal variations.

The Building and demolitions permits monthly survey covers 2,600 municipalities representing 94% of the population. It provides an early indication of building activity. The communities representing the other 6% of the population are very small, and their levels of building activity have little impact on the total.

The value of planned construction activities shown in this release excludes engineering projects (e.g. waterworks, sewers, culverts, etc.) and land. The annual rate is a monthly figure that has been seasonally adjusted and multiplied by 12 to reflect annual levels.

projects in British Columbia accounted for most of the growth of the multi-family component.

Despite November's jump, activity in the residential sector has been slowing down since the beginning of the year as a result of lagging single-family dwelling construction intentions. The single-family component represents about 70% of the residential sector. During the first 11 months of the year, municipalities issued \$11.7 billion in permits for single-family dwellings, down 3.8% compared with the same period in 1997. In contrast, permits for multi-family housing rose 1.3% to \$4.6 billion.

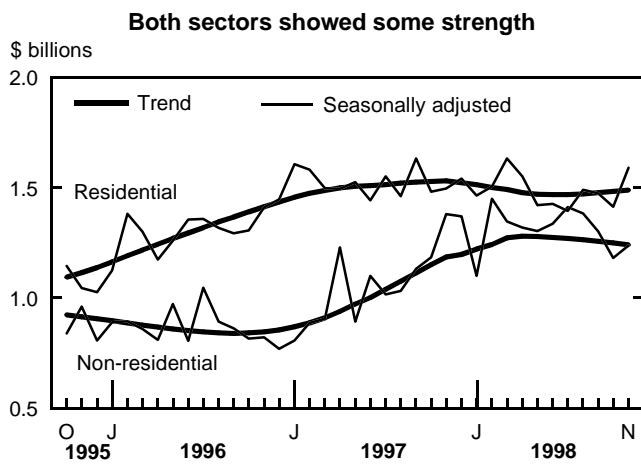
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) recently reported a decline in the rental vacancy rate in metropolitan centres from 4.1% in October 1997 to 3.4% in October 1998. This was the lowest level since April 1990. Potential high demand for rental dwellings may explain part of the increase in multi-family dwelling intentions. Also, according to the Canadian Real Estate Association, housing re-sales increased a slight 0.4% in November.

CMHC also reported a 6.5% decrease in housing starts in November. The slowdown in building intentions since the beginning of 1998 was also reflected in the cumulative number of housing starts, down 5.8% for the first 11 months of the year.

Some market indicators, however, were still encouraging for the overall housing sector: mortgage rates stayed low and employment grew for the sixth consecutive month in December.

Provincially, the largest increases in housing permits occurred in British Columbia (+48.7% to \$260 million) and Ontario (+16.7% to \$743 million). The most significant declines were in Manitoba (-6.2% to \$37

million), Alberta (-4.7% to \$220 million), and Quebec (-3.2% to \$235 million).



The non-residential sector trying to maintain its momentum

Following a very active first half of the year, the value of permits in the non-residential sector declined for three consecutive months prior to November's 4.7% increase. In contrast with previous months, permits for work on improvements were worth more than permits for new construction.

For the first 11 months of 1998, the total value of non-residential building permits reached \$14.4 billion, up 24.2% from the same period in 1997. This was the best performance for the first 11 months of any year since 1989.

The commercial component registered an 8.9% gain to \$665 million in November, following a decline of roughly 25% in the previous two months. The increased

activity came mainly from construction intentions for office buildings and laboratories.

The institutional component registered the highest movement, rising 16.0% to \$253 million in November, following a sharp 24.4% decline in October. This gain was due mainly to plans for medical and hospital buildings.

The industrial component was the only area to decline in November, with the value of permits falling 9.6% to \$318 million. Most of the decreased activity came from the utilities and transportation facilities.

On a provincial basis, monthly increases occurred in Quebec (+47.7% to \$252 million), British Columbia (+17.1% to \$168 million) and Ontario (+5.1% to \$487 million). In British Columbia and Ontario, the increase was led by the institutional component. In Quebec, all three components, but mainly the industrial sector, contributed to the large increase.

Non-residential construction intentions declined 15.3% to \$187 million in Alberta and 35.4% to \$36 million in Saskatchewan, due in both cases to large drops in industrial intentions. Manitoba posted a 17.8% decline to \$47 million in November, with a sizeable reduction in its institutional component.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 80 (levels 3-7 and 33-48), 129, 137, 443, 989-992, 994, 995 and 4073.

The November 1998 issue of *Building permits* (64-001-XIB, \$19/\$186) will be available shortly on the Internet. See *How to order publications*.

The December 1998 building permits estimates will be released on February 7, 1999. For further information or to inquire about the methods, concepts or data quality of this release, contact Joanne Bureau (613-951-9689; burejoa@statcan.ca). For analytical information, contact Ginette Gervais (613-951-2025; gervgin@statcan.ca), Investment and Capital Stock Division. □

Value of building permits

	Oct. 1998 ^r	Nov. 1998 ^p	Oct. to Nov. 1998	Nov. 1997 to Nov. 1998
	seasonally adjusted			
	\$ millions		% change	
Canada	2,594.1	2,826.0	8.9	-1.7
Residential	1,412.9	1,589.3	12.5	6.2
Non-residential	1,181.2	1,236.7	4.7	-10.4
Newfoundland	21.4	20.6	-3.8	81.3
Residential	8.4	8.7	3.4	0.4
Non-residential	13.0	11.9	-8.5	340.4
Prince Edward Island	12.1	9.4	-21.6	27.4
Residential	5.8	4.8	-17.2	2.7
Non-residential	6.2	4.6	-25.8	70.1
Nova Scotia	55.1	60.7	10.2	10.2
Residential	29.2	36.3	24.1	38.5
Non-residential	25.8	24.4	-5.6	-15.5
New Brunswick	37.1	34.4	-7.4	13.4
Residential	18.0	19.5	8.4	2.4
Non-residential	19.2	14.9	-22.2	32.0
Quebec	413.8	487.4	17.8	8.0
Residential	243.0	235.1	-3.2	3.5
Non-residential	170.8	252.3	47.7	12.6
Ontario	1,099.6	1,229.4	11.8	1.5
Residential	636.5	742.7	16.7	6.9
Non-residential	463.1	486.8	5.1	-5.7
Manitoba	95.9	83.3	-13.1	36.5
Residential	38.9	36.5	-6.2	46.0
Non-residential	57.0	46.8	-17.8	30.0
Saskatchewan	77.7	58.5	-24.8	5.0
Residential	22.0	22.4	2.2	29.6
Non-residential	55.8	36.1	-35.4	-6.2
Alberta	452.4	407.8	-9.9	-31.1
Residential	231.2	220.4	-4.7	-5.9
Non-residential	221.3	187.4	-15.3	-47.6
British Columbia	318.7	428.4	34.4	9.2
Residential	175.0	260.2	48.7	10.3
Non-residential	143.7	168.2	17.1	7.6
Yukon	3.1	3.6	14.9	-46.6
Residential	1.6	1.4	-9.9	-51.7
Non-residential	1.5	2.2	40.6	-42.5
Northwest Territories	7.1	2.5	-64.5	13.4
Residential	3.3	1.3	-60.8	324.2
Non-residential	3.8	1.2	-67.8	-36.1

^r Revised Data

^p Preliminary Data

Note: Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

■

Childhood asthma

1994/1995

The prevalence of childhood asthma reported in surveys has increased sharply over the last two decades, as has the number of admissions to hospital as a result of the disease.

In 1978/79, an estimated 2.5% of children under age 15, or about 141,000, were reported to have asthma. By the mid-1980s, the percentage had risen only slightly, to 3.1%. However, by 1994/95, 11.2% of all children in this age group, or about 672,000, were reported to have asthma.

At the same time, asthma accounted for a jump in hospital admissions, although hospitalization rates had levelled off by 1994/95. In 1978/79, 12,215 out of every 100,000 children who had been diagnosed with asthma at some point in their life had been admitted to hospital for asthma. This increased to 16,381 during the mid-1980s. Thereafter, the number of children with asthma rose much faster than the number of hospital admissions. Consequently, in 1994/95, 4,326 out of every 100,000 children diagnosed with asthma had spent some time in hospital because of asthma.

Asthma is one of the most common causes of hospitalization among children. An inflammatory disorder of the airways, it causes recurrent episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness and coughing, particularly at night or in the early morning. A history of bronchitis and allergies, and parental asthma are associated with higher rates of asthma in children.

Asthma more common among boys

Throughout the period studied, asthma was more common among boys than girls. In 1978/79, 3.4% of boys under age 15 had asthma, compared with only 1.6% of girls in this age group. Close to two decades later, these proportions had virtually quadrupled, but the gap persisted. In 1994/95, asthma was reported for 13% of boys and 9% of girls.

Note to readers

This report is based on an article in the Winter 1998 issue of Health reports, available today. The article uses survey data, hospital records and vital statistics to trace trends in the prevalence of asthma among children. It also analyses the health and lifestyle consequences of asthma for children, as well as factors associated with childhood asthma.

Data on asthma among children up to the age of 11 came from the first cycle of the 1994/95 National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth. Information for children aged 12 to 14 was taken from the household component of the 1994/95 National Population Health Survey (cycle 1). Supplemental historical information on the prevalence of childhood asthma was obtained from the 1978/79 Canada Health Survey and the 1983/84 Canadian Health and Disability Survey.

Selected indicators of asthma among children in Canada, excluding territories

	1978/79	1983/84	1994/95
Population aged 0-14	5,531,000	5,326,000	6,000,000
Number with asthma	141,000	167,000	672,000
% with asthma	2.5	3.1	11.2
Hospital separations for asthma	17,223	27,357	29,073
Per 100,000 population aged 0-14	311	514	488
Per 100,000 population aged 0-14 with asthma	12,215	16,381	4,326
Asthma deaths	16	13	9
Per 100,000 population aged 0-14	0.29	0.24	0.15
Per 100,000 population aged 0-14 with asthma	11.3	7.8	1.3

Prevalence of asthma among children, by selected characteristics, Canada excluding territories 1994/95

	Number	Diagnosed with asthma	Children with asthma who had attack in past year
	'000	%	
Total	6,000	11	51
Sex			
Male	3,096	13	50
Female	2,904	9 ¹	51
Age			
0-4	1,960	7 ¹	57 ²
5-9	1,931	13	50
10-14	2,108	13	48
Region			
Urban	4,894	11	45 ¹
Rural	1,099	11	52
Not stated	7	—	—
Household income			
Lowest/Lower-middle	1,063	13	54 ⁴
Middle	1,960	10 ³	51
Upper-middle	1,994	11	50
Highest	911	13	46
Not stated	72	—	—

¹ Significantly lower than other items in category

² Significantly higher than ages 10-14

³ Significantly lower than lowest/lower-middle and highest income groups

⁴ Significantly higher than highest income group

— Amount too small to be expressed

Note: Because of rounding, detail may not add to total.

Children in middle-income households had a significantly low prevalence of asthma compared with those in both lower- and higher-income households. However, among children with asthma, those in lower-income households were the most likely to have had a recent attack.

Use of health care resources

Childhood asthma has a major effect on the nation's health care facilities. Children under age 12 with asthma averaged around six consultations with physicians or pediatricians in the year prior to the 1994/95 National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth - about double the number for children without asthma.

During the same period, 11% of children with asthma were admitted to hospital. However, this

proportion was 19% among those who had had an asthma attack during the previous year. In contrast, only 5% of children who did not have asthma had been hospitalized.

Younger children were more likely than older children to be hospitalized for asthma. This may reflect the higher rate of recent attacks reported for children aged 4 and under. In 1994/95, asthma was the leading cause of hospitalization among children aged 1 to 4. For older children, it ranked second or third, depending on their sex.

At all ages, boys were more likely than girls to be hospitalized for asthma.

Regional patterns: Prevalence highest in Atlantic Canada, lowest in the Prairies

In 1994/95, the prevalence of childhood asthma was highest in Atlantic Canada, where 14% of children aged 14 and under had been diagnosed with the disease at some point in their life. This compares with about 10% of children in this age group in the three Prairie provinces, the lowest proportion of any region.

Trends in hospital admission rates for asthma have been similar in all regions. Rates rose until the late 1980s or early 1990s, then declined. In 1994/95, the highest rates were in Atlantic Canada and Quebec; the lowest in British Columbia. This marked a change from the 1970s when the Prairies had the highest rate of admissions, while Quebec had the lowest.

Several factors should be taken into account when interpreting regional trends in hospitalization rates for childhood asthma. Differences may reflect the organization of outpatient services, the availability of hospital beds or access to primary health care. In addition, the severity of asthma within the child population of each region may vary.

The Winter 1998 issue of *Health reports* (82-003-XPB, \$35/\$116; electronic: 82-003-XIE, \$26/\$87) is now available. See *How to order publications*.

For more information, or to inquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Wayne J. Millar (613-951-1631, millway@statcan.ca), Health Statistics Division. ■

OTHER RELEASES

New housing price index

November 1998

In November, the New Housing Price Index for Canada showed an increase of 0.7% compared with the same period a year earlier. From October to November 1998, this index of contractors' selling prices for new houses remained unchanged.

New Housing Price Indexes

(1992=100)

	Nov. 1998	Nov. 1997 to Nov. 1998	Oct. to Nov. 1998
		% change	
Canada total	100.2	0.7	-
House only	100.8	1.2	-
Land only	101.7	0.2	-
St. John's	95.8	-0.8	-0.2
Halifax	108.4	1.5	-
Charlottetown	105.0	3.8	0.7
Saint John-Moncton-Fredericton	93.0	-1.6	-0.1
Quebec City	98.5	-0.2	0.1
Montréal	102.5	0.5	-0.1
Ottawa-Hull	98.7	1.9	0.3
Toronto	103.0	2.4	0.3
Hamilton	102.8	2.4	0.1
St. Catharines-Niagara	101.0	2.0	0.8
Kitchener-Waterloo	100.5	1.0	0.1
London	98.4	0.9	-
Windsor	104.7	-0.6	-
Sudbury-Thunder Bay	100.2	-1.3	-
Winnipeg	112.4	0.7	0.1
Regina	125.5	3.3	-
Saskatoon	112.7	2.1	-
Calgary	125.1	6.7	0.1
Edmonton	108.8	3.4	0.6
Vancouver	85.9	-4.9	-0.2
Victoria	77.6	-6.6	-0.5

- Nil or zero

The largest monthly increases were noted in St. Catharines-Niagara (+0.8%), Charlottetown (+0.7%) and Edmonton (+0.6%) as some builders passed on increases in construction costs to new home buyers. Smaller increases were also noted in several other Canadian cities. However, these increases were completely offset by monthly decreases registered in Victoria (-0.5%), Vancouver (-0.2%) and several other Canadian cities. Six of the 21 cities surveyed showed no monthly change in November.

Annual changes varied considerably among the cities surveyed. The largest annual increase was

observed in the active Calgary (+6.7%) market. The largest annual decreases were noted in Victoria (-6.6%) and Vancouver (-4.9%) where market conditions continue to be very competitive.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 9921.

The fourth quarter 1998 issue of *Construction price statistics* (62-007-XPB, \$24/\$79) will be available in March 1999. See *How to order publications*.

For further information, or to inquire about the methods, concepts and data quality of this release, contact Louise Chaîné (613-951-3350, fax: 613-951-2848, infounit@statcan.ca), Client Services Unit, Prices Division. ■

Residential Telephone Service Survey

November 1998

Data in the form of a microdata file from the November 1998 Residential Telephone Service Survey are now available. Information in this file refers to telephone service penetration rates in Canada's ten provinces.

To order the microdata file (56M0001XDB, \$500), contact Anne-Marie Lodge (613-951-4598; 1-800-461-9050), Special Surveys Division.

For further information, or to inquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Marc Hamel (613-951-2495; hamemar@statcan.ca), Special Surveys Division. ■

Canadian domestic air travel

Fourth quarter 1997 (preliminary)

Preliminary annual air passenger origin and destination data are now available for 1997. The data represent passengers who travelled within Canada on scheduled flights provided by major air carriers.

For more information, or to inquire about the concepts, methods, and data quality of this release contact Jodi-Anne Massicotte (613-951-0163), Aviation Statistics Centre, Transportation Division. ■

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

Production and disposition of tobacco products,
November 1998
Catalogue number 32-022-XPB
(Canada: \$7/\$62; outside Canada: US\$7/US\$62).

Health reports, Winter 1998, Volume 10 No.3
Catalogue number 82-003-XIE
(Canada: \$26/\$87; outside Canada: US\$26/US\$87).

Health reports, Winter 1998, Volume 10 No.3
Catalogue number 82-003-XPB
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Statistics Canada

Thursday, June 3, 1997
For release at 9:30 a.m.

MAJOR RELEASES

- **Urban transit, 1995** 2
Despite the emphasis on taking urban transit, Canadians are using it less and less. In 1995, each Canadian took, on average, about 2.5 trips on some form of urban transit, the lowest level in the past 25 years.
- **Productivity, hourly compensation and unit labour cost, 1995** 4
Growth in productivity among Canadian businesses was modest weak again in 1995, accompanied by sluggish gains in employment and slow economic growth during the year.

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- **Steel primary forms, week ending May 31, 1997** 12
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PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

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